

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 DHA-02 L-03 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00
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FM AMEMBASSY ASUNCION
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0535
INFO AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES
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AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: SHUM, PA
SUBJ: ILHR MISSION TO PARAGUAY

REF: STATE 129310

1. A TWO-MEMBER TEAM FROM THE INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS (ILHR) WAS IN PARAGUAY JUNE 23 TO JULY 2 MAKING A STUDY OF THE PARAGUAYAN LEGAL SYSTEM, WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO CASES INVOLVING POLITICAL PRISONERS. THE TEAM WAS COMPOSED OF FORMER US AMBASSADOR TO BOLIVIA BENJAMIN S. STEPHANSKY AND DAVID HELFELD, LAW DEAN OF THE UNIVERSITY OF PUERTO RICO.

2. IN ACCORDANCE WITH ILHR REQUEST, THE EMBASSY GAVE THE GOP ADVANCE NOTICE OF THE PROPOSED MISSION, AND AFTER ITS ARRIVAL THE TEAM RECEIVED THE FULLEST GOVERNMENT COOPERATION. ALL DOORS WERE OPENED ON THE OFFICIAL SIDE, ALLOWING INTERVIEWS WITH CABINET MINISTERS, JUDGES, PROSECUTORS, LAW PROFESSORS, AND LEADING MEMBERS OF THE LOCAL BAR. THE VIP TREATMENT INCLUDED A LONG INTERVIEW WITH PRESIDENT STROESSNER, A LUNCHEON HOSTED BY FOREIGN MINISTER NOGUES,
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AND A RECEPTION AT WHICH PRESIDENTIAL ASSISTANT PAPPALARDO INTRODUCED THE MISSION TO MEMBERS OF THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS.

3. WHILE HERE, THE TEAM ALSO CONSULTED FULLY WITH CHURCH LEADERS, LAWYERS DEFENDING POLITICAL PRISONERS, FORMER DETAINEES AND OPPOSITION AND HUMAN RIGHTS LEADERS. AT THE TEAM'S REQUEST THE EMBASSY MADE ALMOST ALL APPOINTMENTS, AND OTHERWISE PROVIDED

SUCH SUPPORT AS THE TEAM REQUIRED INCLUDING TRANSPORTATION WHICH WAS ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY FOR THE TEAM TO COMPLETE ITS CROWDED SCHEDULE OF APPOINTMENTS. UPON HIS DEPARTURE, FORMER AMBASSADOR STEPHANSKY EXPRESSED GRATITUDE AND COMPLETE SATISFACTION WITH GOP AND EMBASSY COOPERATION.

4. THIS VISIT CONTRASTS FAVORABLY WITH THE ONE MADE LAST YEAR ON BEHALF OF THE ILHR BY STEPHANSKY AND PROFESSOR ROBERT ALEXANDER OF RUTGERS. ON THAT OCCASION THE OFFICIAL RECEPTION WAS SOMEWHAT COOL, THE MISSION WAS NOT RECEIVED BY THE PRESIDENT AND CONTACTS WERE MAINLY WITH THE OPPOSITION. APPARENTLY THE NEW GOP ATTITUDE REFLECTS THAT THE GOVERNMENT AT LEAST HAS BECOME MORE SOPHISTICATED AS A CONSEQUENCE OF THE YEAR'S EXPERIENCES. FOREIGN MINISTER NOGUES DURING HIS LUNCH FOR THE GROUP STATED THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAD NO INTENTION TO GAIN GOODWILL BY "WINING AND DINING" THEM, BUT HAD COME TO THE CONCLUSION THAT COMPLETE OPENNESS ON THE PART OF THE GOP WAS THE BEST POLICY.
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